

THE DEATH RUNE TRIBE



The Goblins of the Death Rune are a small tribe of unusual goblins. The tribe counts a surprising number of spellcasters among its ranks. The tribe was founded by the legendary goblin hero Iglex Fril, who survived an archmage's *symbol of death*, which slew all his companions. Iglex was intelligent (for a goblin) and became obsessed with the wizard and the arcane symbol that could bring death to so many. He desired to harness such awesome power for himself—with it, he could subjugate all other goblins and become a mighty king!

Iglex died before he could realise his (unrealistic) dream, but by then, his obsession had taken root in the tribe.

SOCIETY & ORGANISATION

The Death Rune tribe is not numerous; it counts only 80 warriors, 48 noncombatants and only 62 young in its ranks. If it were not for the tribe's numerous spellcasters, it would have been wiped out long ago.

The tribe also keeps almost a dozen wolves as pets, guards and mounts and has secured the services of a small number of bugbear mercenaries. These powerful allies serve as the tribe's shock troops.

Over the decades the tribe has collected a goodly number of spellbooks, scrolls and the like. Most such items are held by the chief, Shik Zekka, who allows the tribe's spellcasters to study them. She controls access to the tribe's arcane treasury and uses it as a reward for good behaviour or a punishment for bad behaviour. Some books and items are beyond the goblins' abilities; such items are kept hidden and safe against the time their mysteries can be unlocked.

PERSONALITIES

Most of the tribe are nothing more than magic-obsessed goblins intent on gaining as much personal power and comfort as possible. A few members of the tribe, however, are exceptional for one reason or another.

- **Shik Zekka** (female goblin) rules the tribe by dint of her impressive intelligence and magical power. She enjoys lording it over her followers and loves showing off her arcane mastery. She has few morals and dreams of mastering the Death Rune; woe betide any nearby settlements if she should ever do so.
- **Firk Diz** (male goblin) dwells with his "lady" on Shik's Isle. Wholly obsessed with his own standing, he does not love Shik—in fact, he barely tolerates her. Firk is, however,

an excellent actor and plays his role well. He suspects Shik keeps several spellbooks for herself; once he has found them Shik's days will be numbered.

- **Merf Gra** (male goblin) knows that something dwells in the lake. He has seen friends disappear—suddenly pulled under the water with no chance of escape. He blames Shik; she is a mighty wizard and should slay the beast. He harbours some minor magic power and is ready—even eager—to betray his chieftain.

ECOLOGY & LAIR

The Goblins of the Death Rune dwell amid the ruin of the gnomish minehold of Glimmerstone. The goblins are at home in the gnomes' cramped passages and the remains of their delving. They fish Blackglimmer's dark, cold waters and hunt in the surrounding forest. When the mood takes them, small raiding parties sneak forth to ambush vulnerable travellers or to fall upon isolated homesteads and the like.

Most of the tribe dwells upon Blackglimmer's banks. The lake provides a useful source of food and somewhere to dump waste. The Death Rune's chieftain, Shik Zekka, claims an island of sorts set at the rear of the lake and holds court there away from the stink and noise of her followers.

The goblins are adept at sculling across the lake on crude but serviceable rafts crafted from wood taken from the surrounding woodlands.

COMBAT & TACTICS

Goblins, by nature, are vicious, evil creatures who delight in the pain and suffering of their foes and victims. The Death Run goblins are no exception to this, but the tribe's warriors rarely engage in hand-to-hand combat. They much prefer ranged combat—particularly from ambush. Archers and slingers soften up approaching foes while the tribe's spellcasters deal with enemy wizards and the like.

Elite warriors and powerful spellcasters ride wolves into battle—or at least around the fringes of a battle hurling missiles and spells at particularly troublesome foes—while the tribe's bugbear mercenaries wade into melee.

Unless fighting to defend their home, the tribe's warriors have no compunction fleeing a battle lost.

CREDIT

This is a short extract from the System Neutral Monstrous Delve *Goblins of the Death Rune* by Creighton Broadhurst.